

From the Acting Chief Medical Officer
Dr Elizabeth Mitchell



Department of
**Health, Social Services
and Public Safety**

An Roinn

**Sláinte, Seirbhísí Sóisialta
agus Sábháilteachta Poiblí**

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HSS(MD)21/2006

To:

Chief Executives, HSS Boards and Trusts
Directors of Public Health, HSS Boards
Director of Nursing, HSS Boards
Directors of Pharmaceutical Services, HSS Boards/Trusts/CSA
GP Medical Advisers, HSS Boards
Consultants in Communicable Disease Control, HSS Boards
Medical Directors, HSS Trusts (*for onward distribution to all Consultants*)
Nursing Directors, HSS Trusts (*for onward distribution to all Community Nurses*)
All General Practitioners (*for onward distribution to practice staff including practice nurses*)
All Community Pharmacists
Occupational Health Physicians
Regional Epidemiologist, CDSC (NI)
Dr P Jackson, Chair RACCDC Regional Immunisation Cte

Our Ref: HSS(MD)21/2006
Date: 20th June 2006

Dear Colleague

UPDATE ON MEASLES AND MMR IMMUNISATION

The purpose of this letter is to update you on the epidemiology of measles in the UK and the changes to policy on MMR immunisation.

Measles

There has been a surge in the numbers of measles cases during the first half of this year in England – 449 confirmed cases of measles in England and Wales to the end of May 2006. This compares to 438 cases for the whole of 2003 and will therefore represent the highest number of cases in one year since the current method of monitoring began in 1995. They are distributed across the English regions with the exception of the North East. In April 2006 one child died from measles, this was the first UK fatality from measles in fourteen years. The child was a member of the travelling community. Cases have also been reported in healthcare workers in London. The outbreaks in England are attributed to decreasing levels of MMR immunisation coverage. Outbreaks of measles have also been reported in Scotland, Germany and the USA.

To date there has been no increase in confirmed cases of measles in Northern Ireland – www.cdscni.org.uk .

Measles is a serious disease and, as such, DHSSPS has consistently recommended that all children receive two doses of MMR vaccine. Updated information on MMR immunisation recommendations is contained in 'The Green Book'. This includes a new recommendation on MMR immunisation for healthcare workers.

'The Green Book' Weblink:

<http://www.dh.gov.uk/PolicyAndGuidance/HealthAndSocialCareTopics/GreenBook/fs/>

Chapter 22, Measles Weblink:

<http://www.dh.gov.uk/assetRoot/04/12/44/88/04124488.pdf>

Actions Required for HSS Boards, HSS Trusts, General Practitioners

- Ensure all children are offered and recommended two doses of MMR before school entry.
- Ensure all school pupils have completed two doses of MMR before school leaving.
- Vaccinate rubella susceptible women of child bearing age.
- Occupational health departments are advised to implement the updated policy in The Green Book (Chapter 22: Measles <http://www.dh.gov.uk/assetRoot/04/12/44/88/04124488.pdf>) on MMR vaccination of healthcare workers.
- HSS Boards and Trusts should be prepared to respond to cases of measles and to clusters in community and institutional settings. This will include timely diagnosis and investigation and vaccination as advised by the local Consultant in Communicable Disease Control (CCDC).

For further information please contact:

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Yours sincerely

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Dr N Morrow
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Prescribing Advisers, Health & Social Services Boards
Directors of Primary Care, Health & Social Services Boards
Regional Drug and Poisons Information Service
Dr J Mairs, Regional Procurement Pharmacist
Local Health & Social Care Groups – Chairs/Managers
Dr B Dunn, Chair, GPC, BMA
Dr B Gaffney, Chief Executive, HPA NI
Mr P Maguire, Information Office, DHSSPS
Ms C Baxter, Information Office, DHSSPS
Members of the RACDC Regional Immunisation Committee

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